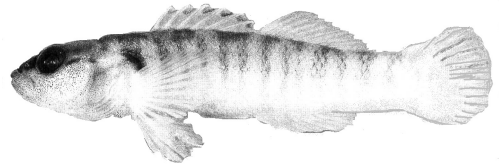


# Duskytail Darter

*Etheostoma percnurum*



Paratype UMMZ 220238

**Description** - In Virginia, the duskytail darter is known to occur only in the lower main channel of Copper Creek and the Clinch River in Scott County. The only other location for this fish is five streams in Tennessee. "Dusky tail" refers to the reduced barring on the tail. This fish reaches a length of up to 2.5 inches and can live up to two years. In both sexes, the coloring is dull. The top of the head is gray, the belly is white, and there are vertical lines down the sides. During breeding, the male's features and coloring become distinct and they can be distinguished from females.

**Life History** - Adult duskytail darters are found in warm, clear, slow-running water from large creeks to medium-sized rivers with little silt, and gravel, rubble, or boulder bottoms. The spawning season is April through May. The female lays one cluster of 23 to 200 eggs on the flattened underside of a rock. During incubation the male cleans and protects the cluster. Young and juvenile duskytail darters

are found in pools and the slower flowing edges within these streams. This species rarely inhabits heavily silted areas. The diet of the young fish is micocrustaceans and larvae of aquatic invertebrates. Adults eat aquatic invertebrate larvae and will sometimes eat fish eggs.

**Conservation** - The duskytail darter was federally listed as an endangered species on April 27, 1993. This species was formerly more widespread in Virginia and Tennessee, but its range has been fragmented by impoundments. Siltation and pollution also may have eliminated some populations. The remaining populations are small and scattered. Due to the duskytail darter's short life span, any habitat disturbances significantly impact this fish. The threats to this species are impoundments, siltation, water withdrawals, pollution, agricultural runoff, chemical spills and water quality degradation from poor land use practices.

**What You Can Do To Help** - If you own property that borders a stream or other waterway, avoid using chemicals or fertilizers. To help control erosion and reduce runoff, maintain a buffer of natural vegetation along the stream bank. Install fencing to prevent livestock from entering the stream, this will reduce siltation and input of waste products.

For more information on the duskytail darter contact:

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## References

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